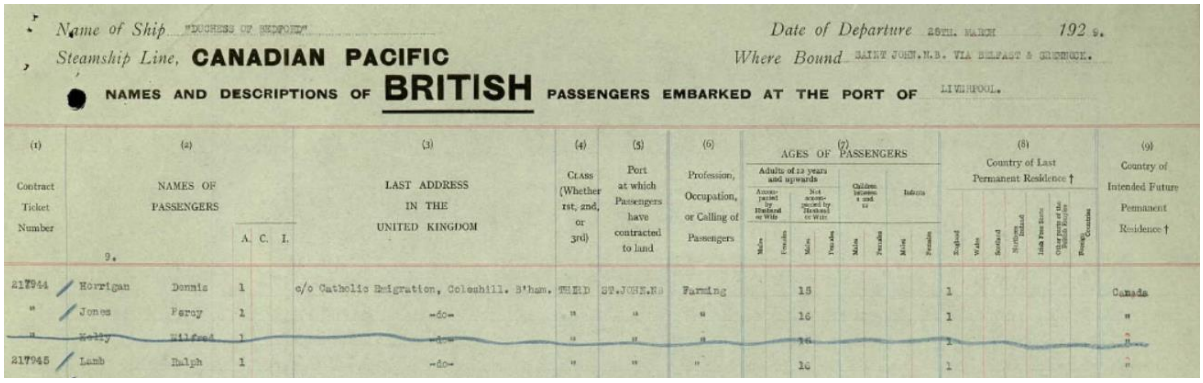
LAMB, Ralph John

Leading Aircraftman, 536874
9 Squadron, Royal Air Force
Place of Birth: Newcastle on Tyne
Date of Death: Friday, 12th April 1940
Lost at Sea
Memorial: Runnymede
Aged 27 years

Ralph John Lamb was born on 8th January 1913 in Newcastle on Tyne. His parents were Ralph Lamb and his wife Margaret Annie nee Donaldson.

On 28th March 1929, Ralph, aged 16 travelled on the Duchess of Bedford bound for St John, New Brunswick as part of the Catholic Emigration to Canada. He was found employment as a farm hand.



Name of Ship DUCHESS OF BEDFORD *Date of Departure* 26TH. MARCH *192 9.*

Steamship Line, **CANADIAN PACIFIC** *Where Bound* SAINT JOHN,N.B. VIA BELFAST & GREENOCK.

NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF **BRITISH** PASSENGERS EMBARKED AT THE PORT OF LIVERPOOL.

(1) Contract Ticket Number	(2) NAMES OF PASSENGERS		A.	C.	I.	(3) LAST ADDRESS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM	(4) Class (Whether 1st, 2nd, or 3rd)	(5) Port at which Passengers have contracted to land	(6) Profession, Occupation, or Calling of Passengers	(7) AGES OF PASSENGERS: Adults of 12 years and upwards (Accompanied by Husband or Wife: Male, Female; Not accompanied by Husband or Wife: Male, Female); Children between 1 and 12 (Male, Female); Infants (Male, Female)	(8) Country of Last Permanent Residence † (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Irish Free State, Other Parts of the British Dominions, Foreign Countries)	(9) Country of Intended Future Permanent Residence †
217944	Horrigan	Dennis	1			c/o Catholic Emigration, Colenhill. B'hum.	THIRD	ST.JOHN.NB	Farming	15	1	Canada
"	Jones	Percy	1			-do-	"	"	"	16	1	"
"	Kelly	Wilfred	1			-do-	"	"	"	16	1	"
217945	Lamb	Ralph	1			-do-	"	"	"	16	1	"



In November 1936, aged 23, he returned on the SS Dorelian to England from Montreal, Canada where he had been working as a cattleman.

On his return to England Ralph joined the RAF and in 1937 his name appears on the absent voters list as serving with the RAF as AC2, 536874, his home address is recorded as being 28 George Street, Newcastle on Tyne. This was also the home address of his parents so Ralph obviously returned to the family home after his stay in Canada.

In 1939 Ralph joined heavy bomber No. 9 Squadron which flew the Vickers Wellington and later the Avro Lancaster. From 15th July 1939 No 9 Squadron was based at Honington.

On 4th September 1939, the second day of the war, 9 Squadron's Wellington aircraft and crews were the first to hit the enemy. As an Aircraftsman 1st Class, Ralph flew in Wellington L4262 on this operation to bomb enemy battleships near the Kiel Canal.

Men from the Honington based 9 Squadron often came to Haverhill to enjoy the dances in the Town Hall and it is likely that this was how Ralph, known as Spike, met Kate Vera Parker the daughter of Thomas and Emma Parker of 27 Hamlet Road.
They were married in the Old Independent Church on 21st October 1939.



For the first four months of the war, No. 9 Squadron conducted daylight anti-shipping sweeps over the North Sea, taking steadily increasing losses, until 18th December 1939, when German fighters shot down five aircraft. Two of Ralph's colleagues, Tom English and Reginald Thomas Black, who had also met their wives in Haverhill, were

killed in action on this date. After this fateful day the squadron concentrated on night time operations.

Spring was a relatively quiet time but this ended in April 1940 with the German invasion of Norway. Twelve Wellingtons from No. 9 Squadron moved to Lossiemouth in Scotland on 2nd April, to support the allied expedition to Norway.
12 Apr 1940: 83 aircraft from 5 squadrons were involved in an operation to attack enemy battle cruisers off the Norwegian coast. Nine of these were Wellingtons from No 9 Sqn. They took off from Lossiemouth at 09.20hrs in appalling conditions and as they neared the Norwegian coast they were met by heavy flak and intercepted by Luftwaffe fighters. Ralph's Wellington did not make it back. It was last seen at 13.05hrs flying a couple of miles off the coast. It is believed that it crashed into the sea off Stavanger. This was Ralph's twelfth operational flight.

The crew of Wellington P2520 was:
Sergeant Charles R. Bowen, age 27, pilot
Sergeant James D. Aitchison, age 25
Sergeant William L. Balmer, age 27
Leading Aircraftman Ralph J. Lamb, age 27
Aircraftman 1st Class Percy Ricketts, age 22
Leading Aircraftman John L. Wilkin, age 19



They are all commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.

Sadly, Ralph never met his son, also named Ralph John, who was born on 6th September 1940.

After Ralph's death, his wife Kate remained in Haverhill, living in Duddery Hill.

Their only son Ralph grew up in the town marrying Daphne June Forge in 1963. They were very well known in Haverhill as the publicans of the Black Horse Public House in Camps Road.

With grateful thanks to Donna Bush nee Lamb for information about her grandfather.